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TYPES OF JOBS
PERFORMED BY DEAF-BLIND PEOPLE

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HELEN KELLER NATIONAL CENTER

FOR DEAF-BLIND

YOUTHS AND ADULTS

The question often asked by workers in both the adult and children's programs is: What types of jobs are being performed by deaf-blind people? The Helen Keller National Center has been hesitant about publishing a list, in view of the number of queries received.

In presenting this list, workers must be cautioned to think of it as information relative to the types of work that some deaf-blind persons are employed in at the present time. There is always the danger that a list may be used as a stereotyped guideline, and that some workers may plan to train a deaf-blind person to operate a drill press just because others are doing it, rather than completely exploring the individual's abilities that can be developed to perform a variety of operations.

Teachers of deaf-blind children often ask the above question in the interest of preparing their students for a specific job. It is more logical to develop good social skills and those attributes of good work habits which will be important to the individual's potentials for successful employment. There are more jobs lost because of poor work habits and poor attitude than because of poor production performance.

A list is just a list: but imagination, perseverance, and faith in the people we serve are paramount characteristics professional workers must have to insure the best opportunities for each person served.

In addition to the training necessary for the development of skills, the individual's medical status must also be evaluated, for example: the single-spindle drill requires the operator to sit, whereas the multiple-spindle drill requires the operator to stand. Before placing an individual at any job, one must look at the individual's transferrable abilities and skills, as well as the general medical, ophthalmological, audiological, and other diagnostic reports, which may impose work restrictions and limitations.

Before selecting a job for an individual, it is also necessary for the placement worker to do a thorough job analysis to determine all the movements and other demands required to perform the task under consideration. Evaluation must be made of the individual's ability to stand, bend, lift, reach, stretch, stoop; his tolerance toward heat, cold or dampness - and his ability to work with others.

Job titles alone do not tell us the different requirements in order to perform the tasks essential to complete specific operations. Therefore, in compiling titles of jobs that deaf-blind people are performing throughout this country, we must bear in mind the necessity of matching an individual's skills and abilities to job requirements.

It is important not to train an individual for a job just because the job is being successfully performed by other deaf-blind persons. Rather, it is important for a deaf-blind individual to gain maximum skill from an academic and/or vocational rehabilitative training program so that he may have a choice of several jobs. It is this opportunity that the deaf-blind person will appreciate most, as he will be able to choose the job, taking into consideration all alternatives, with the knowledge that he has taken an active role in making his own selection.

Keeping all this in mind, we will list in categories jobs being performed by deaf-blind persons. If you know of others, the author would be pleased to hear from you to add it to future lists.

COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT

Machine operations: drill press operator; tapping; boring; countersink operator; maudrel operator; flat-iron feeder and receiver; washing machine and dryer

operator; dish-washing machine operator; lathe operator; power-press operator; kickpress operator; arbor hand-press operator. Also baker's helper, furniture repairman, duplicating machine repairman, bricklayer.

SERVICE INDUSTRY

Shaker; sorter; and folder in hospital laundry; manual dish and pot washer in hospitals/motels; assistant to vending stand operator; vending stand operator, porter.

ASSEMBLIES

Electrical assembly - including assembling electrical circuits and calibration work; power-pack assembly - assembly on a production line, using both power and hand tools, and small, medium and large parts; mass-production assembly - assembling bicycle components on a mass-production line; combination machine and hand assembly-fitting parts into machines using both pneumatic and hand tools.

CLERICAL

Messenger; library worker; (it should be noted that the blindness of a number of deaf-blind individuals takes the form of a severely constricted visual field, in which a fairly high degree of usable vision remains); collator and packager in large mailing division.

PARAPROFESSIONAL

Agency administration; teacher/counselor with a state agency; systems analyst; computer programmer; public speakers; community education director; psychologists; author.

SHELTERED WORKSHOPS

Sewing machine operator; bench and line assembler; broom maker; steel band mop assembler; trimmer; packager; collator and packager in sub-contract shops.

HOMEBOUND INDUSTRY

Weaver; chair caner; broom maker; furniture repairer.

As the rehabilitation program at Helen Keller National Center grows, we hope to have the above list expand into new areas of employment offering greater opportunities for qualified deaf-blind persons. It should be noted that a high level of communication and language is not always a prerequisite for employment.

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